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SECRET
No Foreign Dissem

The needs of the President and his top advisers, and how these needs are met.

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE POLICY CHIEFS

James P. Hanrahan [1]

In this discussion of intelligence needs at the top national level and some specific ways in which they are filled, I shall be speaking from the perspective of CIA's Deputy Director for Intelligence. I will not attempt to speak for the other organizations of the Washington intelligence community or pretend to be presenting the whole picture.

First it will be useful to say who the people are that are served by what we call national, as opposed to departmental, intelligence. We start with the President, of course. But we must take into account certain members of his personal staff and in particular his special assistant handling national security affairs and *his* staff. Next come the heads of departments, in particular State and Defense, the military chiefs, and the heads of independent agencies dealing with foreign affairs. Then there are numerous interagency bodies established for the purpose of recommending policy; the Committee of Principals on disarmament is an example. And at the senior level are also the regional proconsuls, such as Ambassador Lodge in Vietnam and Ambassador Bunker in Santo Domingo, who have been delegated extraordinary authority.

But in the end the buck stops at the President's desk, and the advent of the nuclear age has greatly multiplied the number of things he must decide personally. He has almost become, in Richard Neustadt's words, "a decision machine." His decisions in international affairs are influenced by many people and institutions, but in particular by those just mentioned.

The requirements for intelligence at this national level are particularly fascinating because they are so kaleidoscopic. They change with the men, they change with the times, they change with the bureaucratic structure, they change with each policy decision. As a result, it is possible to generalize only most broadly on the needs of

[1] Adapted from a paper prepared for presentation at the Intelligence Methods Conference, London, September 1966.

the senior policy maker. He certainly must be provided, if possible, with what he thinks he needs to know. He sometimes should be provided with things the intelligence people think he should know. Often he must be given material which in the beginning neither he nor the intelligence officer realized would be needed—material generated by the interaction between the two as they work together.

Lines of Contact

The most direct way of finding out what the senior policy maker needs is to ask him. Fortunately, all DCIs have had regular direct access to the President and have not been reluctant to ask what he wants. Meetings in person or talks between the two by phone are more frequent than most people, including Washington political insiders, realize. Mr. McCone, for example, met every morning with President Johnson throughout the first weeks of his administration to deliver an early morning intelligence brief.

There is of course a limit on access to the President and the time he has available. But we are in frequent touch with the other senior policy makers, who not only know their own needs but have a pretty good idea of the President's. Then communication and rapport with the President's immediate staff are of great importance. These men close to him are in the best position to make his needs known. At present they usually do this by telephoning the Director or his Deputy for Intelligence.

We are constantly receiving requests for information and analysis from the White House staffers who handle national security affairs, and it is an advantage that some of our former officers have served or are serving on this staff. For example, when Mr. Komer received his special assignment to concentrate on South Vietnamese problems we asked him how, as a former member of the Office of National Estimates, he felt we could best meet his needs. He asked for a periodic summary of economic and pacification developments in South Vietnam, information that tends to get buried in the welter of military reporting, and we now have such a weekly publication tailored especially for him.

Moving from the White House to the Pentagon, the Agency has an intelligence officer serving in the office of Secretary McNamara. He is attuned to the Secretary's needs and levies many requirements on us for him. These supplement those that come directly from Mr. McNamara through his frequent meetings with the Director.

Over at State we have a new mechanism called the Senior Interdepartmental Group, chaired by the Under Secretary of State and comprising top representation from agencies concerned with foreign affairs, including the DCI. The SIG is responsible for insuring that foreign policy problems requiring interdepartmental attention receive systematic consideration. It stands at the apex of a series of Interdepartmental Regional Groups chaired by the Assistant Secretary of State for each region. Intelligence is represented on each of these groups, too. They thrash out new regional policy recommendations which then move on through the Senior Group to the Secretary. In essence, the new system attempts to apply in Washington the country-team approach of a large American embassy abroad. We expect these groups to become particularly important in the slower-moving policy problems; the big, Class-A flaps tend to bypass any set institutional framework, generating their own high-level task forces responsive directly to the President.

Outside the departments there are the several statutory or ad hoc committees with special tasks in the field of foreign affairs. Intelligence is represented on many of these bodies, for example on the Economic Defense Advisory Committee concerned with Western multilateral trade to Communist countries and on the Advisory Committee on Export Policy handling U.S. unilateral controls.[2]

Last but by no means least, to discover the needs of the policy maker there is always the "old boy" net: people we have known, gone to school with, worked with, played with, fought with, and whom we are now in contact with either on the policy level or in intelligence components. To take one good example, one of our representatives eight years ago at the first Intelligence Methods Conference, William P. Bundy, is now Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. From these people, because they know us and we know them, we get a constant stream of suggestions as to the needs of the men above them, and we usually hear quickly when what we produce fails to meet those needs—so that we can try again.

Tailoring

How do the needs of the senior policy maker, these "national" requirements, differ from departmental requirements? To my mind they can be distinguished in two ways: first, if they involve more

[2] See Sherman R. Abrahamson's "Intelligence for Economic Defense" in *Studies* VIII 2, p. 33 ff.

than one department's interests and it is either difficult or plain impossible to separate out each department's responsibility; second, if they are so critical that the judgment of more than one department is desired. More simply, you might say that when any of the people or groups we have been talking about asks you something, you know it is a national requirement because they are all involved in the making of national policy. It is almost impossible today to identify a national policy matter that lies wholly within the sphere of one department.

What level of detail does the policy maker require? No clear-cut answer can be given. In the Cuban missile crisis one did not have to be clairvoyant to know the President was himself handling all the details of the naval quarantine and that he personally wanted to know the exact location of every Soviet merchant ship that might be bound for Cuba. We did not wait to be asked, we simply sent the information on as fast as we obtained it. At certain points in the Laotian crisis in the spring of 1961 also, it became obvious that, as Ambassador Winthrop Brown put it, the President was the "Laotian desk officer." And everyone knows how greedy for information an area desk can be.

There are some other maximums. Anytime the lives of a country's nationals, civilian or military, are endangered in foreign countries, the highest level wants to know about it quickly and in as much detail as possible. Communist kidnapings in Latin America, helicopter shootdowns in the Berlin area, or for that matter shootdowns anywhere—in all these cases the President wants to get the complete word. These days when he must spend a great deal of time with the Vietnamese war, we have found it wise to err on the side of giving too much in this field rather than too little.

Beyond these cases where it is obvious that you shoot the works, there are only rules of thumb. We have come, fortunately or no, a long way since the good old days of the one-page precis so favored by General Marshall. If we are specifically asked for something by a senior policy maker and no length is mentioned, we write as much as we think required to do the job, no more. Then we ask someone to review it and cut it in half for us. If this cannot be done—or even if it can—we put a summary up front.

If we have not been asked specifically but feel it desperately important to get something across to the senior policy maker, brevity is the overriding virtue. Conclusions and judgments are the nub; argumentation can come later. If his appetite is whetted, if he wants to

know more, or if he violently disagrees, we expect to pick up some feedback somewhere along the line so that we can follow through with more detail as necessary.

It is here that the regularly scheduled publication, the daily or the weekly, comes into play. By and large we find that such publications prepared for senior policy makers should hit the high spots. It is not necessary for them to carry all the classified news that's fit to print. They should serve rather as an alert to any developments which might directly or indirectly affect the nation's security. In the course of preparing them every bit of information the intelligence officer can get his hands on is reviewed, but it is then put through a very fine screening. If the policy maker wants more on a given subject or if the intelligence officer thinks the policy maker needs more. a separate memorandum or paper is written.

Communication Hazards

There are always difficulties in maintaining contact with the policy maker. One difficult situation is when he is on the road—how to get to him in an emergency, how to keep up his continuity of information. We have partly solved this one through a system of briefing cables tailored specifically for the high-level traveler. They consist in the main of a synopsis from our daily publication supplemented by material in which the traveler may have a special interest because of the area he is visiting or the people he is meeting.

Sooner or later, a period seems to come when the demands on the time of the senior policy maker are so enormous as to preclude our getting through to him in any way at all. In these circumstances we can only wait for an opening and hope he may be able to take a quick look at our regularly scheduled intelligence publications. In these we note the things that he really should not miss even if he *is* spending 100% of his time on Vietnam or the Dominican Republic.

When Mr. Kennedy became President, he brought with him a deep interest in foreign affairs, a voracious appetite for reading, a retentive memory, and above all a different style of doing things. Our publications in January 1961 simply did not fit his needs. Our primary daily publication was the Central Intelligence Bulletin. It had been expressly asked for by President Truman. Then it was specially adapted to meet President Eisenhower's needs, and although we had tried to alter it further it did not suit President Kennedy's style and he did not read it.

We were thus without a daily link or any periodic link with which to carry out our critical alerting function. We bent every effort to restore contact. Finally we succeeded, adopting a new publication different in style, classification, format, and length but not different in fundamental concept—a medium whereby we present to the President in the tersest possible form what he should know about the play of the world for that day, particularly as it impinges on U.S. national security interests. This publication became the President's alone, leaving the Bulletin to serve readers at the next level down.

There remains one other basic problem of communication with the policy maker. That is that the desk-level intelligence analyst, the fellow at the heart of the process, is never going to have all the clues to what is making the high-level world go 'round. He does not sit in on the National Security Council sessions. The Director, who does, cannot for various reasons—the need-to-know principle, the sheer physical impossibility of spreading the correct word and feel down far enough—fully communicate it to the analyst. I submit, however, that the analyst is not thereby relieved of his responsibility to keep track of developments in national policy. The daily press and the favored columnists are excellent sources. If the President or the Secretary of State delivers a speech on foreign policy, it will be revealing and should be read. I suspect that the percentage of intelligence analysts who read such speeches is still far from 100%. You hear the argument that the less one knows about policy the more objective one's analysis is. But the counterargument that you cannot produce intelligence in a vacuum, cannot recognize threats to U.S. policy interests unless you know what those interests are, seems to me overriding.

From Need to Deed

So on the question of requirements for intelligence at the national level, we might summarize as follows: In large and complex governments, there are no simple ways to determine the full range of the policy maker's needs. They change as situations emerge, develop, and subside. Communication—free and easy contact in an atmosphere of confidence—is essential to the smooth working of the intelligence-policy relationship. Mechanisms can be established to speed the flow of intelligence up and requirements down, and these mechanisms are essential. But nothing is so valuable as an effective person-to-person relationship. In our country all policy authority and decision rest ultimately in one man. It is he that intelligence must serve.

Now we turn to how we go about filling the policy maker's needs, however expressed or divined. This is a discussion of technique, and form, and formula. Again let me stress that I am not saying, "This is the way to do it," but "This is the way we in CIA are doing it." We do it both by working in concert with other members of the intelligence community and by preparing unilateral reports.

The *scope* of the information we process is determined by the nature of the information that comes in and by the range of national security interests it impinges on. The *form* in which it is processed is determined by the requirements of the consumers, in particular the quite personal requirements and preferences of the President. From the beginning almost twenty years ago, the DCI has considered his role to be that of the President's number-one intelligence officer, responsible for seeing to it that the President is kept unexceptionably informed and directing the work of the entire intelligence community to that end.

In the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the White House has generally preferred to deal with big problems by calling together the top policy makers, putting all the available information on the table, and then discussing possible courses of U.S. policy and action. This method of operating places a premium on rapid intelligence support. "Rapid" does not necessarily imply crash assessments, thoughts formulated on the run. It is more often a matter of reshaping or resynthesizing for the occasion the assessments we have already published in our regular production routine. I want to underscore the importance of a deep and stable base of day-to-day intelligence production. This is what enables us to respond quickly to big and little flaps, whatever the subject or area.

Regular Production

The routine production base includes three "national" intelligence publications representing the coordinated views of the intelligence community and dealing respectively with the past, present, and future. The past, so to speak, is represented by the National Intelligence Survey, an agreed-upon basic compendium of factual detail and historical development. The future is represented by the National Intelligence Estimate, containing the best thinking the community can put forward on a given problem for future U.S. policy. The present is represented by the Central Intelligence Bulletin, the daily which brings current developments to the attention of high-level readers in brief form.

The procedure for coordinating the evaluations made in the Bulletin among the agencies of the intelligence community may be of interest. Each day the items are drafted in the CIA Office of Current Intelligence, often with help from analysts in CIA's economic, scientific, and technical research components, and circulated to the community by secure communications channels. They are reviewed by the competent desks and branches within CIA, in the Defense Intelligence Agency, and in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the State Department, whose representatives then meet in the afternoon, bringing such changes, additions, or deletions as the desks may have suggested. An agreed version is hammered out, footnotes being used, as in national estimates, to register any sharp dissent. By six o'clock in the evening the draft Bulletin constitutes agreed national current intelligence. Before the publication reaches its readers at the opening of business the next morning, however, it has to be updated. We in CIA make the changes unilaterally, so marking them. The Bulletin's reporting on Vietnam, for example, will incorporate information received up to 4:30 in the morning; this is not an hour conducive to formal coordination.

Besides coordinating these community publications we produce others under the CIA imprint, some of which may also be coordinated with other agencies. A weekly world roundup reviews current reporting in a little deeper perspective, and one or two special annexes accompanying it usually treat some current problem in a fairly comprehensive way. Then there are regular publications for particular purposes, such as a daily Vietnam situation report, the weekly Vietnam report I mentioned, a weekly tailored to the needs and agenda of the new Senior Interdepartmental Group, and monthly compilations on shipping to North Vietnam and Cuba.

Special Publications

A problem common to these regular issuances is created by the conflicting demands of classification and dissemination. We want to serve as broadly as possible everyone in the government requiring intelligence information for the performance of his duties. On the other hand, we want to be able to publish information of the most restrictive classifications. We tightly limited the dissemination of the Central Intelligence Bulletin from its inception in order to make its content as comprehensive as possible. But new collection mechanisms with highly compartmentalized reporting systems now supply

information which cannot go even to all recipients of the Bulletin. There are valid reasons for the restrictions, but they make it impossible to serve the Director and the President adequately with normal publications.

We are therefore forced to create new and ever more tightly controlled special publications for these readers. They are prepared by a very small number of senior officers and go outside the Agency in only a very few copies. Their content is governed by the concept that there can be no piece of information so highly classified or so sensitive that it cannot be passed to the President. The main one is the President's Daily Brief. It generally follows the lines of the Bulletin, but it contains added material too sensitive for the wider audience and is written in a more spritely style, with less concern for citing the evidence underlying the judgments expressed.

Inevitably, some such publications become more widely known and get into such demand that their dissemination creeps up, no matter how hard we fight it. At this point, lest the added circulation destroy their purpose, we put sensitive information on a separate page included only in the copies of the prime recipients.

The trouble with regular publications, in addition to the classification problem, is that they tend to have fixed deadlines, format, and dissemination schedules and hence suffer in flexibility and timeliness. As a result, we have been turning increasingly to individual intelligence memoranda to meet many of our responsibilities. Then we can let the requirements of the particular case dictate the deadline, the format, and the distribution, as well as the classification.

For the CIA research components one of the most important developments in recent years has been a sharp increase in the servicing of policy makers with memoranda and longer reports devoted to particular policy issues. This reflects both a more sensitive appreciation on our part of precisely what kinds of intelligence are required and a growing awareness among policy officials that intelligence can be responsive and helpful on some of the more troublesome questions underlying their decisions. A few of the economic studies done recently in support of policy decisions have been on the effects of economic sanctions against South Africa, the logistic situation of the Communist forces in Vietnam, the effectiveness of U.S. bombing there, the consequences of certain proposed actions in the Zambia-Rhodesia

crisis, and the implications of change in U.S. economic policy toward the Communist world.

From scientific and technical research come, for example, special memoranda concerning foreign military research and development, especially in the USSR and Communist China, for consumers such as the President's Scientific Advisor and Advisory Board, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and the Director for Defense Research and Engineering in the Department of Defense. These officials have an important role in determining the direction U.S. military research and development must take to counter the Soviet and Chinese threat. They often require more detail than is presented in the standard National Intelligence Estimate, or they require very specific answers to equally specific technical questions. Such memoranda are often accompanied by a briefing.

The intelligence memorandum originally prepared in answer to a specific request from a senior policy maker also tends to generate additional, self-initiated memoranda either to update the first response or to insure that the recipient, in concentrating on a narrow aspect of a problem, doesn't overlook something else that is germane. Finally, in servicing such requests from the policy maker you build up over a period of time an intuitive sense of what he is going to ask, and you anticipate it.

The Operations Center

Another way we endeavor to insure that we are providing timely and useful intelligence support is to know what is going on with U.S. operational forces. We have found that our top customer regularly expects a full picture of any crisis situation, particularly where U.S. forces are involved or may become involved. To be able to marry the kinds of data wanted on U.S. operations with the customary intelligence on foreign activities and developments, the intelligence producers need regular inputs not only from the intelligence collectors but from the operators. We need immediate access to the operational people in National Military Command Center in the Pentagon. We need to know the directives State is about to send to embassies in crisis situations.

To deal with this problem, we have recently expanded our former Watch Office into an Operations Center. The Center continues to have the watch office function of filtering incoming information and

alerting the proper people as necessary. Outside of normal office hours it is directed by an experienced generalist of senior rank. It has teleprinter service from the Foreign Broadcast Information Service and from the National Security Agency. It has secure teleprinter and voice communications with the White House, Pentagon, and State Department, and through these switchboards with American military and governmental outposts all over the world. The amount of information received and screened in the Center is now running in excess of a million items a year.

The Operations Center maintains up-to-date briefing information on critical situations and areas in a special situation room. When there is a major flap, a task force with representatives from all of the components involved can be pulled into the Center to operate there on a 24-hour basis if necessary. (At one period we had four task forces going—on Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, and Kashmir. I must say it got a little crowded in there.) During the Dominican crisis, the Director called for situation reports every hour on the hour, around the clock. To a certain degree Vietnam reporting now remains in the same category.

The point is, of course, that the policy makers have gone tactical in their concerns, and apparently this is the way it will be whenever the United States is engaged in a fast-moving potentially dangerous situation. At such times the President and his top cabinet officers become involved in day-by-day and hour-by-hour operational planning, down to the selection of targets and the deployment and commitment of troops. This is because of the world-wide political implications of tactical decisions today, and it is made possible by the capabilities of modern communications systems. The situation room in the White House is manned by seven of our experienced watch officers borrowed from the Operations Center, who are no longer completely unnerved to find the President peering over their shoulder at almost any hour.

Fund of Confidence

In summary, we might say that in a system to support the senior policy maker two ingredients are essential—a good production base and a readiness to adapt it as necessary. One must be alert to the changing needs of the policy maker, and be ready to meet them. Above all, there must be a pool of experienced intelligence officers, both generalists and specialists, with continuity in their jobs and ob-

jectivity in their outlook. Ted Sorensen wrote in *Decision-Making in the White House:*

> No President, of course, pays attention to all the information he receives, nor can he possibly remember it all. What he actually considers and retains may well be the key to what he decides, and these in turn may depend on his confidence in the source and on the manner in which the facts are presented. He is certain to regard some officials and periodicals with more respect than others. He is certain to find himself able to communicate more easily with some staff members than with others. He is certain to find that some reports or briefing books have a higher reliability than others.

We want the policy maker to be confident that in asking us for intelligence, he is getting as knowledgeable, pertinent, unbiased, and up-to-date a presentation as it is possible to provide.